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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A method of delivering information across a computer network, comprising the steps of:

receiving a request from a client program for user-selected information; and

transmitting one of (a) only a provider-selected commercially-sponsored message to the client program for display, in response to the request, if no qualifying provider-selected commercially-sponsored message has been previously transmitted to the client program, or (b) only the user-selected information to the client program for display, if a qualifying provider-selected commercially-sponsored message has been previously transmitted to the client program;

wherein the provider-selected commercially-sponsored message comprises HTML and javascript which cause the provider-selected commercially-sponsored message to be displayed for a limited time period when it is transmitted, after which the client program automatically requests the user-selected information.

2. (Currently amended) An apparatus for delivering information across a computer network, comprising:

a computer network; and

an information server for receiving a request for user-selected information from a client program;

the server being configured to transmit one of (a) only a provider-selected commercially-sponsored message to the client program for display, in response to the request, if no qualifying provider-selected commercially-sponsored message has been previously transmitted to the client program, or (b) only the user-selected information to

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the client program for display, if a qualifying provider-selected commercially-sponsored message has been previously transmitted to the client program;

wherein the provider-selected commercially-sponsored message comprises HTML and javascript, which causes the provider-selected commercially-sponsored message to be displayed for a limited time period when it is transmitted by the server, after which the client program automatically requests the user-selected information from the server.

3. (Currently amended) A method of delivering information across a computer network, comprising the steps of:

receiving a request from a client program for user-selected information; and
transmitting one of (a) only a provider-selected commercially-sponsored message to the client program for display, in response to the request, if no qualifying provider-selected commercially-sponsored message has been transmitted to the client program within at least one provider-selected interval, or (b) only the user-selected information to the client program for display, if a qualifying provider-selected commercially-sponsored message has been transmitted to the client program within at least one provider-selected interval;

wherein the provider-selected commercially-sponsored message comprises HTML and javascript, which causes the provider-selected commercially-sponsored message to be displayed for a limited time period when it is transmitted, after which the client program automatically requests the user-selected information.

4. (Currently amended) An apparatus for delivering information across a computer network, comprising:

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a computer network; and

an information server for receiving a request for user-selected information from a client program;

the server being configured to transmit one of (a) only a provider-selected commercially-sponsored message to the client program for display, in response to the request, if no qualifying provider-selected commercially-sponsored message has been previously transmitted to the client program within at least one provider-selected interval, or (b) only the user-selected information to the client program for display, if a qualifying provider-selected commercially-sponsored message has been previously transmitted to the client program within at least one provider-selected interval;

wherein the provider-selected commercially-sponsored message comprises HTML and javascript, which causes the provider-selected commercially-sponsored message to be displayed for a limited time period when it is transmitted by the server, after which the client program automatically requests the user-selected information from the server.

5. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said request from said client program is by means of the Hypertext Transport Protocol.

6. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

transmitting the user-selected information if a qualifying provider-selected commercially-sponsored message has been previously transmitted to the client program.

7-11. (Canceled)

12. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 1, wherein the commercially-

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sponsored message transmitted to the client program for display is formatted for display in a browser window.

13. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 1, wherein state information used to determine whether a qualifying provider-selected commercially-sponsored message has been transmitted to the client program for display, is maintained at least partially by the client program.

14. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 13, wherein the state information is maintained completely by the client program.

15. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 1, wherein state information sufficient to determine whether a qualifying provider-selected commercially-sponsored message has been transmitted to the client program for display, is maintained at a location other than at the client program.

16. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 2, wherein the commercially-sponsored message that the server is configured to transmit to the client program is formatted for display in a browser window.

17. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 2, wherein state information used to determine whether a qualifying provider-selected commercially-sponsored message has been transmitted to the client program for display, is maintained at least partially by the client program.

18. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 17, wherein the state information is maintained completely by the client program.

19. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 2, wherein state information sufficient to determine whether a qualifying provider-selected commercially-

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sponsored message has been transmitted to the client program for display, is maintained at the information server.

20. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 2, wherein the server is further configured to transmit the user-selected information if a qualifying provider-selected commercially-sponsored message has been previously transmitted to the client program.

21. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 3, wherein the commercially-sponsored message transmitted to the client program for display is formatted for display in a browser window.

22. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 3, wherein state information used to determine whether a qualifying provider-selected commercially-sponsored message has been transmitted to the client program for display, is maintained at least partially by the client program.

23. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 22, wherein the state information is maintained completely by the client program.

24. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 3, wherein state information sufficient to determine whether a qualifying provider-selected commercially-sponsored message has been transmitted to the client program for display, is maintained at a location other than at the client program.

25. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 3, further comprising the step of transmitting the user-selected information if a qualifying provider-selected commercially-sponsored message has been previously transmitted to the client program.

26. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 3, wherein the at least one

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provider-selected interval is dynamic.

27. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 4, wherein the provider-selected commercially-sponsored message that the server is configured to transmit to the client program for display is formatted for display in a browser window.

28. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 4, wherein state information used to determine whether a qualifying provider-selected commercially-sponsored message has been transmitted to the client program for display, is maintained at least partially by the client program.

29. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 28, wherein the state information is maintained completely by the client program.

30. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 4, wherein state information sufficient to determine whether a qualifying provider-selected commercially-sponsored message has been transmitted to the client program for display, is maintained at the information server.

31. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 4, wherein the server is further configured to transmit the user-selected information if a qualifying provider-selected commercially-sponsored message has been previously transmitted to the client program.

32. (Currently amended) A method of delivering information across a computer network, comprising the steps of:

receiving a request from a client program for user-selected information; and

transmitting one of (a) only a provider-selected commercially-sponsored message to the client program for display in a browser window associated with the client program,

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in response to the request, if the provider-selected commercially-sponsored message has not been previously transmitted to the client program, or (b) only the user-selected information to the client program for display in a browser window associated with the client program, if the provider-selected commercially-sponsored message has been previously transmitted to the client program;

wherein the provider-selected commercially-sponsored message comprises HTML and javascript, which causes the provider-selected commercially-sponsored message to be displayed for a limited time period when it is transmitted, after which the client program automatically requests the user-selected information.

33. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 32, further comprising the step of transmitting the user-selected information to the client program if the qualifying provider-selected commercially-sponsored message has been previously transmitted to the client program.

34. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 33, wherein the user-selected information is transmitted to the client program for display only if a qualifying provider-selected commercially-sponsored message has been transmitted to the client program within a provider-selected time interval.